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homemakers' chat
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Subject:"TRAY AND PLATE MEALS IN SCHOOL LUNCH ROOMS." Information from food distribution officials of the War Food Administration.

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"Example is better than precept." That may be an old copybook maxim, but it still works pretty well when you apply it in dealing with children. It's especially true in serving school lunches that meet War Food Administration standards for a "complete" or "Type A" lunch.

Instead of talking about foods that are good for children, many school lunch managers now use a simple device for getting children to polish off the kind of meal they need. In these lunches, plate or tray meals are served, and each plate or tray is an example of a correctly combined meal, that provides from one-third to one-half the child's food requirements for the day.

The tray lunch is best if the child has to carry his own lunch to a table without spilling. Lunch room workers assemble the entire lunch, with a knife, fork, spoon and napkin, and hand it to each child. But when places are set for the children at tables, the plates are filled in the kitchen and put in front of each child with his glass of milk and bread.

Either the tray or plate lunch saves time in serving. The children don't hold up the line while they pick and choose. Every child gets an expertly selected lunch. Gradually the pattern of a good lunch becomes fixed in the child's mind. He also comes to know new food flavors and textures, because he will generally try unfamiliar foods when he sees other children eating them.

If you are a member of a mothers' group sponsoring the lunches at your child's school, you may be glad to know that you can write to the War Food Administration, at Washington, D. C., for help in planning menus that meet nutritional standards for growing children. And if your school enters into an agreement with the food

distribution officials to follow certain types of menus, you can be reimbursed from 6 to 9 cents for each meal served, according to the type adopted by the school. There are two menu types, called "Type A" and "Type B." Type B menus have smaller helpings and not quite as many nutritive values as Type A.

Perhaps you'd like to know exactly what the nutritionists consider a "Type A" or first rate lunch. It must include five things: 1) a half-pint of fresh whole milk as a beverage. 2) A 2-ounce serving of meat or fish, or 1 egg, or 2 ounces of cheese, or half a cup, cooked measure, of dry peas, beans, or soybeans, or 4 tablespoons of peanut butter. 3) One cup of vegetables or fruit, or half a cup of each. 4) One or more slices of bread, or muffins or other hot bread, made of whole-grain or enriched flour or cereal. 5) Two teaspoons of butter or margarine with added vitamin A.

The same kinds of food are in Type B lunches, but helpings are smaller. Particularly the servings of protein-rich foods and vegetables or fruit--the vitamin and mineral-rich foods, and butter or other fat. Portions of these foods are only half as large as in the better Type A lunch. However, the child gets a full glass of milk, and plenty of bread, even though it's spread more thinly.

In the Type A lunches, if you like, you can combine 2 kinds of protein foods in your main dish. Sometimes supplies are scarce, or prices are high. So you may want to combine a half portion of fish or eggs with a half portion of cheese to make each full portion of the main dish, or add soybeans to meat in the same way.

To make up a tray meal from these five kinds of food, put an individual serving of the main dish on each plate, with at least half a cup of cooked vegetable. Then add half a cup of some other cooked vegetables, or some raw vegetable "sticks" or a raw vegetable salad, or half a cup of fruit. Children like raw carrot and turnip sticks, as well as celery stalks, wedges of cabbage, florets of cauliflower, and so on, and now in wartime, with many other food supplies limited, these raw vegetables are important. Cooked vegetables are good, too, but the raw vegetables

retain more of the vitamins and minerals the children need.

The lunch also includes a full half pint glass of milk and one or two slices of plain bread or hot bread, with butter or fortified margarine.

For the main protein dish and vegetables you can use any foods that are easy to get locally. For example, in the country, chicken might be cheap and plentiful, but in the city, it would be somewhat high-priced. Country parents might contribute canned or stored vegetables from their own gardens, while schools near city markets could buy some fresh vegetables all winter. Most meats for school lunches take ration points, and you can often stretch a small quantity of meat by combining a cereal with it. Good Dishes for this purpose are: Liver with rice or some other cereal; meatballs and spaghetti; fish and rice, or a whole grain cereal, or spaghetti, macaroni, or noodles. All three of these combinations are improved by seasoning with tomatoes, but the quantity of tomato in a sauce is too small to count as one of the vegetables in the lunch. You also need one or two other vegetables to round out the food values.

Then you could vary the meat-cereal menus with braised heart, stuffed with seasoned bread crumbs or some other cereal; rolled cabbage with meat and rice or some other cereal; tamale pie, made with corn meal; green pepper stuffed with meat and cereal. Egg and cheese dishes also go well with cereal "extenders."

Let's check over the five requirements for Type A lunches: Half a pint of milk, a 2-ounce serving of a protein-rich main dish, a cupful of vegetables, or half vegetables and half fruit, bread or hot bread made with whole grain or enriched flour, butter or fortified margarine. All in all, a good lunch for anybody!

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